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A PETITION

TO THE

HOUSE OF LORDS

FOR

ECCLESIASTICAL IMPROVEMENTS,

WITH

EXPLANATIONS.

BY THE

Rev. C. N. WODEHOUSE,

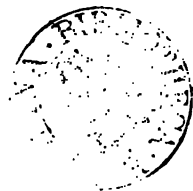
PREBENDARY OF NORWICH.

LONDON:

**LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMAN, AND
MATCHETT, STEVENSON, AND MATCHETT, NORWICH.**

1832.

761.



“ Our worship is the perfectest composition of devotion that we find in
“ any Church antient or modern : yet the corrections that were agreed
“ to, by a deputation of Bishops and Divines, in the year 1689, would
“ make the whole frame of our Liturgy still more perfect as well as more
“ unexceptionable ; and will, I hope, at some time or other be better
“ entertained than they were then. I am persuaded they are such as
“ would bring in the much greater part of the Dissenters to the commu-
“ nion of the Church, and are in themselves desirable, though there
“ were not a Dissenter in the nation.”

Burnet's History of his own Time.

“ Ask counsel of both times—of the antient time what is best, and of
“ the latter time what is fittest.”

Lord Bacon.

INTRODUCTION.

HAVING already circulated* privately many copies of a Petition to the House of Lords, praying for Improvement in one branch of the Ecclesiastical System of the Church to which I have the privilege to belong, no apology I hope can be necessary for laying the Petition before the public, together with the grounds which have induced me to adopt, what may appear to some a hazardous measure. Such an explanation can indeed only be deemed a natural and even necessary step, in order to justify my views, and to guard against error and misapprehension.

I trust, I have no presumptuous reliance on the correctness of my own judgment ; I am

* I beg most respectfully to acknowledge the *numerous* Answers, with which I have already been honoured : and as the sole object, in presuming to request them, was to ascertain on a new Subject, the sentiments of Those whose opinion is so important, I venture to add, that the communications with which any Noble Lords may, on consideration, be disposed to favour me, will be most gratefully received, as intended strictly for my own private guidance in a course which can only be persevered in, under the hope of approbation from that Body to whom my Petition is addressed.

painfully conscious how little I am fitted for the task which circumstances have imposed upon me; yet, undoubtedly, I entertain a strong conviction arising from a long and anxious search after Truth, that the views I am about to state are agreeable to reason, and sanctioned by the Holy Scriptures, and from all, who will dispassionately consider them, I certainly anticipate a ready concurrence in them.

The object of the Petition which I am now to explain is to obtain an Alteration or Explanation of certain parts of the Liturgy of our Church. A Revision of the whole, as well as other Ecclesiastical Improvements, will be also considered.

But, as I am aware that many may be disposed at once to condemn a Clergyman who puts forth any statement which at all impugns the Liturgy or Articles of our Church, at a time, it may be said, when the public are not disposed to find fault with them, I beg in the outset to offer a few remarks in answer to such objections.

In the first place, I observe that, if I was the first to open such a question, there might be ground for censure; but not only have many others, both of the Clergy and the Laity already expressed in these days a friendly wish for such alterations, but I may add, that ever since the Reformation, some of the first Divines have from time to time evinced a desire to complete the

work of our early Reformers ; and, not to enumerate the various alterations which have been effected since the days of Cranmer, the names of those great men who made a vain attempt of this nature in 1689, are a sufficient justification for any one who follows in their steps.*

But it may be said, why open this question *now* ? Why put into the minds of the Laity objections which they are not now disposed to advance ? To this I answer, that it would be best to consider whence the silence of the Laity, if silent they are, really proceeds. Time was when it was considered a more serious matter than it now is, to desert the National Church, and men more justly appreciating the sin of schism and of causing divisions, thought it incumbent on them more formally and openly to justify their separation from it.† If then now it is grown to be a matter of small importance to defend such a separation, it will appear that it is not the absence of objections, but indifference as to justifying them, which is often the

* The Alterations then proposed are not perhaps in all respects such as would be adopted in the present day ; but no satisfactory account has yet been published of the Proceedings of that Commission. The papers are said to be at Lambeth.

† The incomparable Treatise of Hooker was composed in answer to those who objected to the Doctrines and Discipline of our Church ; but *now* an advocate like Dr. Chalmers is required, even to uphold the incontestable truth, that Christianity requires and is entitled to the protection of the State. A reference to his *Work on Ecclesiastical and Literary Endowments*, ought to satisfy *all* who are sincerely desirous for the preservation of Religion.

cause of the silence before adverted to, and what can be a worse symptom than such indifference? For my own part I have no doubt that there are matters connected with our Liturgy, which have long operated in producing some distaste to its Services, though the feeling is not stated in print so often as might be expected. The truth is that the people wander without the trouble of a remark into other folds, or into none. Let it not be said then that objections do not exist—they operate, silently perhaps, but therefore only the more powerfully—and without denying the difficulty and the danger of all changes in religious matters, a danger which no hasty determination would dispose me to encounter, but only the long and quiet reflection of many years, I am convinced that a wiser measure could not be embraced by the Clergy of this nation than voluntarily to come forward and endeavour to render the Services of our Church every way more acceptable—now, when there is no disinclination to such improvements—now, when they are not forced upon them by any party either Religious or Political, in such a manner as to impede an impartial investigation.

But the present time may be objected to as more than usually unfavourable and dangerous, in consequence of the disposition which prevails to invade the *Property* of the Church. It may be said you are only inviting new modes of at-

tack—you are opening a new breach—you are hastening that overthrow from which extreme caution can alone secure us. So far am I from yielding to this reasoning, that to me the case appears exactly the reverse.

Far more prudent, far more safe I am convinced would it be to *meet* the present loud, and somewhat angry, but most unfounded clamour against the Church of this kingdom. Let its real situation be known—let its revenues be laid open,* and the manner in which they are expended, *far superior for the public good to more than the same amount in the hands of any other class of British subjects*. Let its faults too be enquired into, and ascertained, with a simultaneous avowal that they must and shall be amended, and then its true merits will appear. Our case can bear the light—it can meet argument and exposure—it can meet them, that is, if we *really* meet them, instead of indolently suffering ourselves, from the faults of a few, to be overwhelmed by lawless and triumphant rapacity. Improvements, it is allowed by many excellent Churchmen, are wanted. Can such improvements be made unless the public mind is ripe to receive them? All who consider past times know that they cannot. To propose them is not to be overborne by clamour, but to bring them forward at the very time when they are

* Since this was written, I find that an Enquiry into the Revenues of the Church has commenced.

most acceptable. And let us not think too much of what may be *said* as so the motives of any conduct that is right. Much more does it become us to strive to act with Christian simplicity, which is true dignity; and then to leave the event to that over-ruling power on which we of all persons ought fully to rely.

Nor let an unreasonable dread be entertained of what comes under the garb and the name of Reform. Dr. Burton has remarked*—"We ought to be glad that every thing is in the way of being improved, and when all public bodies are reformed, persons will perhaps begin to reform themselves." For myself, I advocate improvements, because I have long believed them to be necessary, and the number is not small who think the same. Experience shews how difficult alterations are in Religious matters, and such an opportunity in this changeful world may not soon recur.

But there is another reason, personally and nearly affecting myself, which has induced me to undertake, which I trust justifies me fully in undertaking the present task: and that is the conscientious doubt which I have long entertained as to the propriety of some few parts of our excellent Liturgy, a doubt, which, when I call to mind the solemn approbation of the whole to which I have subscribed, will not suffer me longer to rest till I have obtained a

* "Thoughts upon the demand for Church Reform."

satisfactory solution. I am well aware how many remarks this declaration may call forth—without entering further upon them at present, I shall only beg my readers fairly to appreciate my situation, and then to consider, before they condemn, whether any better course was open to me than that which I am now pursuing: and I trust their conclusion will be, that I have been led both naturally and properly to combine an endeavour after a public improvement, with the obtaining relief to my own mind.

I now insert the Petition* to which I have alluded, and shall then proceed to render the best justification in my power for its contents:—

To the Right Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled:—

The humble Petition of Charles Nourse Wodehouse, Prebendary of Norwich,

SHEWETH,

That your Petitioner was ordained a Deacon of the Church of England in December, 1814, and Priest in the following year; and within two years after was presented to the Preferment which he now holds.

That your Petitioner begs to remind your Lordships, that by Statutes passed in the 13th Eliz. c. 12, and 14th Car. II. c. 4, and also by the 36th Ecclesiastical Canon, certain Subscriptions and Declarations are required from

* This Petition was first drawn up, very much in its present form in 1824. It was to have been presented in 1828. It was printed with the accompanying notes, as it now appears, and partially circulated, early in 1831. I mention these dates to prove that this is not a hasty proceeding.

every Clergyman at his Ordination, and upon Institution to a Benefice.

That your Petitioner, on reviewing in after years the Engagements which he had thus entered into, became doubtful whether he could renew them if called upon to do so; that further reflection only serving to add strength to such scruples, he feels himself bound no longer to conceal his opinions; and that he now ventures to lay them before your Lordships, in the hope of being relieved from the difficulty in which he is involved.

That your Petitioner begs accordingly to state, that when called upon to declare the Liturgy and Articles of the Church of England to be in every respect "agree-
"able to the Word of God," he thinks himself obliged to make such a Declaration according to the plain obvious meaning of the words then used by him; and that your Petitioner cannot conscientiously affirm the following parts of the Liturgy to be sanctioned by Scripture; namely, the 2nd, 28th, 29th, and 42nd Clauses of the Athanasian Creed; the Form of Absolution in the Office for Visiting the Sick; and the Words used at the Imposition of Hands in Ordaining Priests and Bishops.*

That your Petitioner, in endeavouring to satisfy his mind, referred to the Writings of several distinguished Authors, Members of the Church of England, but did not derive that comfort and assistance which he expected,

* The condemnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed are so well known, that there is no occasion to notice them more particularly. The Form of Absolution is as follows:—

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to
"absolve all Sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his
"great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and by his authority
"committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name
"of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

The Words used in the Office for Ordaining Priests, are these:
"Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest in

because he observed amongst them a considerable difference of opinion on the points to which he has alluded; a difference, which he humbly conceives it might be for the general advantage of Religion to set at rest, by some Explanation or Alterations made by the proper Authority.

That although your Petitioner has not the opportunity of extensive personal communication upon the sub-

“ the Church of God now committed unto thee by the imposition
 “ of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven;
 “ and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained: and be
 “ thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God and of his Holy
 “ Sacraments, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and
 “ of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

The corresponding Form in the Consecration of Bishops is composed much in the same spirit.

It may be well to remember that the parts of the Liturgy objected to in this Petition, differ from the general Contents of that excellent Book, inasmuch as they were not derived from the early Christian Fathers, nor yet were they composed by Protestant Divines. They were first introduced in what are always esteemed the worst ages of the Christian Church, and were probably retained in our Prayer Book for reasons which no longer exist.

The Petitioner ventures to express his firm belief, that a careful revision of these, and some other exceptionable parts, undertaken in a proper spirit, would render the English Liturgy the best human instrument existing, for the extension of pure Religion throughout the world. And how much would it redound to their honour—how much would it extend their influence for good, if such a Revision, *together with a Reform of the few real Abuses remaining in our Establishment*, were promoted by the Clergy themselves. The world would for once see the gratifying spectacle of a large and powerful Body voluntarily coming forward to correct those imperfections, which time is always producing in the purest of human Institutions; and the result, we may humbly hope, would be to render our Church Establishment more acceptable, and therefore more comprehensive; more efficient for the improvement of man, and better entitled to the favour of Heaven.

ject of this Petition, still he has reason to believe that a compliance with its prayer would be acceptable to the Clergy and also to the Laity.

That your Petitioner laments the necessity which leads him to appeal to your Lordships on such a subject, and is painfully conscious of the apparent presumption of this application, but, in the present state of the Church, is unable to discover any other course which holds out a hope of relief.

That for these reasons, your Petitioner humbly and earnestly prays that such steps* may be taken as shall seem good to your Lordships, in order to effect those Alterations in the Liturgy which will relieve the conscience of your Petitioner, and which he firmly believes will at the same time tend to promote Harmony amongst Christians, as well as a more general Agreement in the Public Worship of God.

That in conclusion, your Petitioner begs to express his belief in the Doctrines generally maintained by the Church, and his firm attachment to the Liturgy, the excellence of which he constantly regrets is not more fully appreciated and acknowledged; and he trusts that the sincerity of this attachment will not be questioned, although he cannot consider it entirely faultless, and humbly desires to see it advanced to a still higher degree of perfection.

March 24th, 1831.

* The Petitioner does not appeal to the House of Lords as having authority in such Alterations, but as a Body who might properly address the Crown for a Commission to effect them.

His Petition has, during the last four years, been the subject of communication with several of the Heads of the Church: the presenting it has been delayed, partly in deference to their wishes, and not without a hope that some Measure might be proposed which would render it unnecessary.

SUBSCRIPTION.

Having thus in the foregoing Petition, enumerated in general terms, the nature of those doubts which I entertain as to certain portions of the Liturgy; I now proceed to state, as distinctly as I can, my exact opinions on the points in question.

First, as to the Subscription required in our Church—I presume not to dictate to others what should be their views; I state my own for a particular end, after the best attention I am able to give to the subject, and truly grateful shall I be to any who will impart clearer information.

Various are the opinions which have been published upon this interesting subject: from all that are known to me, I collect the following as being beyond question.

That some pledge as to the opinions of their authorised Teachers, is necessary to the high and important ends of any Religious Society.

That such a pledge should be so constructed as to fetter the conscience as little as possible.

That the Subscribers to such a pledge cannot be too strict in adhering to the literal meaning of the words; it being of the highest consequence to the utility of the Ministers of Religion, to the effect of all that they teach, that

there should be no suspicion of their being capable of duplicity in so solemn a matter, or that they make such declarations in any other than the obvious meaning of the words used by them.

That, notwithstanding every endeavour to frame such a Test as will include all who simply receive the Scriptures as the revealed Will of God, there must still be some latitude allowed ; it being contrary to all experience, contrary to our knowledge of the human mind, and impossible, seeing the variety of matter which the Scriptures contain, that any considerable number of persons should *exactly* concur in Religious views.

That some degree therefore of suspense and uncertainty as to human Articles of Faith is necessarily allowable ; but that when after full enquiry a decided objection to any proposition forming a part of them is once entertained, the Subscription of such a person is incomplete and inadmissible.

That silence under such circumstances is not justifiable, it being in the words of Dr. Hey “ not allowable for a man to retain worldly advantages under the conditions of a Subscription which he is not at any time prepared to renew.”

Having thus stated my own views of Subscription, I come now to explain how they affect myself, and here I have to enter upon a confession which I should be glad to place be-

fore the eye of every Candidate about to enter our Church.

At the time of my own Ordination I certainly felt considerable scruples as to some clauses in the Athanasian Creed: I had no worldly temptation to overpower them, except a liking for my profession, having no prospect of that advancement which has since attended me.* I read in the work of Bishop Tomline (a book then usually recommended to Candidates) very strict views as to Subscription: I found in the same book that the Author declared these same clauses to which I objected, to be "presumptuous and unnecessary." In a work of such authority I considered that I thus had found an ample justification of my own feelings, and I subscribed then, and again within two years.

Circumstances, which need not be mentioned, brought these same clauses again particularly under my consideration; and I was led in after years to consider closely, in all its branches, the Subscription I had consented to: the result was, that I could not in my heart allow those parts of the Liturgy, objected to in my Petition, to be sanctioned by Scripture. To

* Amidst much that is distressing in this Publication, the only circumstance that can render it agreeable, is the opportunity which it affords me of publicly acknowledging the kindness I have received from the Earl of Eldon; who, from an honourable recollection of some little attention experienced from my own family in early life, siezed the first opportunity in his power of placing me in the situation which I have now long enjoyed.

have come to such a conclusion was naturally the cause of much distress. My only relief was to seek the advice of those whom I most respected, and who were most competent not only to advise but to assist. It is with sincere pleasure that I recur to the kindness I then experienced from several eminent persons. I should ill return it was I to lay before the public such communications. I shall only add, that grateful for the time and attention thus bestowed on many occasions, I finally requested to receive the *authoritative opinion of the Church* upon the points under discussion. The answer informed me, that it could not be obtained ; and thus it appears that there exists no authority empowered to pronounce upon my opinions, or to point out to me the course which I am bound to pursue in consequence of them.

Several different courses might be suggested, and would indeed occur to a person so situated.

It might be said by some that I ought to resign my Preferment ; but, however easy to give such advice, in my case it would, I believe, be difficult to justify it : and I believe that such a course would be *far* more injurious to the Church than the one I am now pursuing. I have reason to think that a large number of Clergymen concur *partly* in my views. I have reason to think that few Laymen will condemn them. I have the strongest reason to hope that Alterations or Explanations on the points in-

cluded in my Petition would be of real and permanent advantage to Religion. Moreover, I have yet heard no opinion of weight which urges me to a step, certainly injurious to the Church, however insignificant the individual who resorts to it, and in a worldly view probably ruinous to myself.

It might again be suggested to me, (seeing that I was left in such uncertainty) to be silent, and endeavour to satisfy myself that I was not culpable in so remaining. To this I can only answer, that the comments which had been made upon my opinions, though with few exceptions never severe, were such that I could look for no inward satisfaction in such a course. By former Subscriptions, I have declared that the Liturgy and Articles are “agreeable to Scripture” or “not contrary to it;” by declarations since made in several different quarters, I have allowed that to this Subscription *in its literal sense*, I could not adhere; I resolved therefore, whatever the consequences, no longer to live under the galling consideration, the bitterness of which I have sufficiently felt, that I passed through life supposed to be bound by certain conditions known to all the world, which in my heart I partly disapproved.

But another course might be suggested—indeed it has been—“wait in patience till a fit time arrives, and see whether your opinions, being, as you think, generally concurred in,

“do not bring their own justification, by your
 “witnessing the alterations which you desire.”
 To this I answer that I have already waited
 longer than is for my own comfort. These are
 not opinions formed in a day, but the result of
 the quiet deliberation of many years. In the
 mean time I carry about with me an unwel-
 come consciousness that my situation is not
 what it ought to be : life slips away : exertion
 too is paralysed—my Clerical endeavours, poor
 as they are, are encumbered and perplexed by
 inward dissatisfaction—and I am doubtful what
 change a day may bring upon me. Suspense in
 short is what all acknowledge, painful ; and in
 time it becomes necessary to know the worst.—
 But it is said, “wait for a more convenient
 “time,” for four years *I have* waited, and I
 have seen each less favourable than the last :
 and I have good reason to conclude that if the
 views I have long entertained on Ecclesiastical
 affairs had been acted upon some years ago, our
 Church would have been in a better position
 than it now is. I am therefore only the more
 confident of their correctness—more resolute to
 wait no longer. And what is a favourable sea-
 son ? When all is quiet and secure, who then
 shall persuade persons to move ?—does experi-
 ence shew that in such times changes are
 effected ? Certainly not. The Heads of any
 Public Institution are very naturally seldom seen
 to bring forward changes and improvements of

the least risk, unless encouraged from without. It is only when public opinion powerfully coincides with such changes, that there is a chance of their being effected.

But it may be said, why carry Ecclesiastical Affairs, or rather Religious discussions, before the Parliament. To this I answer, that it is the natural course for any Englishman who has a grievance to complain of. The Ecclesiastical Parliament can scarcely be said to exist. I do not regret it.* I do not regret that the Convocation is no longer permitted to furnish an arena for interminable Religious Debate—but when the situation of the Church is such that it provides no means by which such cases as my own can be authoritatively determined, here is a fair ground to request from the House of Lords a remedy, which no other power can so easily procure.† Moreover, what method could I

* Yet it is perhaps to be regretted that the Clergy have not some mode of occasionally communicating their opinions as a Body. Had they now such an opportunity they would do themselves justice in the eyes of the nation, and would be found the Advocates of all that can help to extend the influence of Religion, both in this country, and throughout the world.

† I do not discuss the propriety of Petitioning the King as the Head of the Church: this is not a course which, even if correct in point of form, an individual, certainly such an individual as myself, would presume to adopt. But was it otherwise—the Crown does not act without responsible advisers—and no Minister would recommend the changes here advocated without first ascertaining the opinion of Parliament, or, in other words, the sense of the nation.

adopt so likely to attract observation, and to elicit the true leaning of public opinion? But other, and those not trifling reasons, have induced me to adopt this course. When, in consequence of the doubts which I entertained, I entered upon a new examination of all those Engagements by which every Clergyman is bound, and examined the Liturgy and Articles which we all declare to be sanctioned by Scripture, I was naturally led, where a doubt arose, to consult the opinions of others more competent than myself, and to ascertain, where I could, the feelings of my contemporaries on the same points; and when I found that not only a number of ancient Authorities leaned to my views—when I found that a Revision of these Forms had been often partially effected, that a fuller Revision had been in vain attempted; that many, of my own day, wished to see the Liturgy of our Church more entirely acceptable to the public, not only did I feel myself justified in attempting to obtain relief in my own case, but I thought that I might justly go forward, in endeavouring, as far as my feeble voice could prevail, to obtain a Public Improvement, in the full reliance that so acting I consulted as well the general good as my own individual ease and satisfaction. I proceed indeed, under the consciousness that I shall be condemned, and perhaps as to worldly matters may suffer—but the hope of relief to my mind is a sufficient induce-

ment to make me incur this, and the conviction that ere long these changes will be adopted, will console me under the censure that may be inflicted, and the worldly losses which may ensue. But upon this head I will at present say no more—thus much I thought it necessary to state, to explain my views as to Subscription, the difficulty in which they had involved me, and the reasons for deciding on a Petition to the Parliament.* I shall only repeat, that I wished it to be Presented four years ago, and that it has been deferred in deference to the opinion of many whom I am bound to respect. I trust that the few who know me will not accuse me of a presumptuous reliance on my own judgment: I have endeavoured to form my opinions by those means which Reason and Religion suggest. I feel it necessary to publish them, humbly hoping they may work no ill to my neighbour.

* The presence of the Bishops will, no doubt, sufficiently account for this Petition being addressed to the Upper House. It may be useful here to cite an Authority so justly high as that of Hooker with respect to the Power of Parliament. "It is allowed," he says, "that in spiritual matters, in framing a Liturgy, in drawing up Articles of Faith, in prescribing Ceremonies, Bishops and Spiritual Pastors are far more competent than men of secular occupations. But when their Wisdom has done its best, it is the general consent of all classes, both temporal and spiritual which gives to their labours the form and vigour of laws, without which they would be nothing more than whole-some admonitions and instructions. * * *

"Wherefore to determine Ecclesiastical matters by way of assent and approbation is within the Province and competence of Parliament."

THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

Having thus stated my views as to Subscription, and the difficulty in which they involve me, and having, I hope, in some degree justified the course I am adopting to obtain relief, I now come to explain the Grounds of those Objections enumerated in my Petition.

I well know with what suspicion a proceeding like this will be entertained, and how easy it is to affix opprobrious names to any individual. I may go down to my grave branded with epithets that little belong to me. But as I have the inexpressible satisfaction of being assured that Man's judgment is as nothing, so on the other hand I can with humble confidence appeal to an Infallible Judge, that Truth alone has been my object : and I have learnt that no worldly advantage, no worldly praise is for a moment to be compared with the remembrance of having in all Godly sincerity borne testimony to the simple voice of conscience. Regardless then of human censure, unfettered by terms which Controversy has engendered, and taking the Scriptures for my guide, I shall only record those conclusions to which they have conducted me.

The Declaration required of every Clergyman is, that he believes the Articles to be agreeable to the Word of God, and that the Liturgy contains nothing contrary to it.

The first question I come to is—Do the 2nd, 28th, 29th, and 42nd clauses of the Athanasian Creed accord with this Declaration?

In stating my opinion on this point, I shall naturally be excused for mentioning also my views as to the whole Creed: and though I am not particularly anxious whether the words I may use will exactly suit this Party or that; though I am not so feverishly sensitive as many good men of my own Church as to Trinitarian definitions, esteeming a lively and artless “Faith working by Love” to be the grand desideratum of the Gospel; though I cannot but remember that such was probably the faith of the best Christians in the two first centuries, before Trinitarian doctrines were moulded into system, or the term Trinity ever heard;* yet are the matters treated of in this

* “Whatever private men’s opinions were, yet till the Nicene Council, the rule of Faith was entire in the Apostles’ Creed; and provided they retained that, easily they broke not the unity of Faith, however differing opinions might possibly commence in such things in which a liberty were better suffered, than prohibited with a breach of Charity.”

Liberty of Prophecy, 3rd Edition, p. 957.

The Work, from which this is an Extract, is worthy of serious attention; as indeed is every reflection penned by that learned and Exemplary Christian, Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

Creed of such fundamental importance, and so including the very essentials of Christianity, that I should be sorry indeed to be at all mistaken concerning them: and deeply should I regret to give occasion to *one Christian* to say, that I had written a word which could lower in the estimation of others, the distinguishing Doctrines of our holy Faith.

Now, whoever receives the New Testament as the Word of God—as written in accordance with the directions of that Spiritual Comforter expressly promised to its Authors, must, in my belief, come to the conclusion that the Supreme Being is therein revealed to man, under three distinct Names and Persons, exercising each a special yet harmonious interest in the present and future destiny of our fallen race: and that these Three are partakers of one Divine Nature or Essence. The manner of that Union I presume not for a moment to comprehend or define—but if such (as no doubt it is) that it includes an entire unity of Will and Counsel, this is a sufficient explanation to my limited faculties how the grand foundation of all Religion, the Unity of God can be maintained: while in the Unity of the Divine Essence are comprehended the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Various were the notions, the fancies indeed which prevailed before this conclusion could be deemed regularly settled in the Church. Who-

ever reads the account of those Speculations, possessing at the same time a competent knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and from that study turns to the Athanasian Creed, must admire the extraordinary subtlety and acuteness with which erroneous theories are rejected, and the correct deductions from Scripture are maintained. I do not say that every phrase is exactly such as might be wished, but as to its general propositions, I see not how any one can believe in the Bible, and after a fair investigation reject them. I regret that such distinctions and subtleties were esteemed necessary; I do not presume to understand them, but I compare the propositions with the Writings from which they are deduced, drawn out to answer a special end in the defence of truth, and I believe the deductions to be correct. Explanations I do not term them, for that name would be improperly affixed to them.

There may be those who consider that I am writing too coldly on such a subject: but let them remember what is the document on which I am arguing.—To descant in the glowing language of devotion upon metaphysical propositions would be incongruous; but if my feelings are asked on the doctrines which they propose, I hope my heart is not wanting in gratitude for the consoling wonders which they contain: and the knowledge of a Divine Saviour, and a Divine Comforter, partakers of that exalted na-

ture in which They are united to the Supreme Father of all, conveys to my mind joy and comfort unspeakable. I receive it as a Revelation filled with good-will to man, and am thankful for that distinguishing feature which pervades the whole, namely, a plan to save us from our sins, to assist our imperfect struggles after Holiness, and to fit our corrupt nature for the enjoyment of eternal peace in a better World.

Still, I cannot forget that the Creed of which I am writing is a human composition: that it consists of Propositions, the deductions of human reason—that the words of Scripture are studiously excluded from them: and when to these I find attached in various parts, denunciations which exclude from the hope of Heaven all who do not coincide; all, who may happen amidst the infinite variety of human opinion, and amidst those changes of opinion which occur to the same Individual at different periods, to view somewhat differently the mysterious points there defined, I seek in vain for a Justification of these threats—and having studied much that has been written in their defence, have only to confess that to me they are indefensible.

I will not enter upon the various modes which Theologians have adopted to defend them. The most usual, I believe, and the strongest is a reference to Mark xv. 16, and upon this I con-

tent myself with asking of any plain Christian, whether, when he reads this awful threat against those who do not receive the GOSPEL, he can find in it a sanction for the even more appalling threat that all who do not believe in a certain series of human propositions contained in a Creed, shall "without doubt perish everlastingly?" But I have in my Petition objected to the 29th Clause. I hope after what I have written, I need not defend myself against the imputation of rejecting the Doctrines to which this is attached. I have only therefore to repeat that I believe any such threats ought not to be used by man, or applied to any statements of any description, which are couched, not in the words of Scripture; but drawn up by the imperfect faculties of a fallible creature.

There is one course adopted with reference to these clauses, to which, as it is sanctioned by high authority, I wish to advert. It is said, "these clauses form no part of the Creed." In this there appears something like a recognition of my objections; but however this may be, I must express my regret, (and I do it with a diffidence which nothing but entire conviction could overcome) that such a method of getting rid of their unpopularity has been resorted to: and I regret it, because I conceive, that if Those who have bound themselves by a plain Subscription can thus evade its plain application, the sincerity of their concurrence in other

Doctrines which they profess may reasonably be questioned. The getting rid of these clauses *thus*, depends upon the exact interpretation of a word: and though Scholars comprehend the precise purport of the term CREED, I fear Christians at large will be at a loss to understand how these clauses are not a part of the Athanasian Confession, because they are not amongst a series of propositions which contain an enunciation of the Divine Nature as revealed to man, which it is certainly the main object of this Creed to deliver, but which do not form the whole of the Writing known by that name: and they may justly ask, if they are not a part of the Athanasian Creed, of what are they a part?

And here I advert to another circumstance connected with this Creed which strengthens all I have advanced. It is appointed to be frequently read. It was intended then not for the learned merely, but for all. It is now listened to with distaste by a large number of serious Christians attached to the truths which it enumerates. It is heard with entire aversion by others—many sit down during the reading—some would not attend Church if they knew it was to be read. I do not defend these practices, but there must be something in objections so strong. Even Clergymen dislike its use. It provides a topic for all to declaim upon, who want a pretext whereon to ground an attack

upon our Liturgy. Why is all this? chiefly on account of these clauses.—Without them it might have been in reality what it is now, I fear, very improperly styled, “a bulwark of the Faith:” it might insensibly by its influence have led many to adopt sound and Scriptural views: it might have preserved many intelligent Christians in attachment to its truths—it would have been more generally advocated and explained. Now, the reverse of all this is the case. The clauses have largely contributed to bring into disrepute the Doctrines; and, instead of protecting, have helped, by inviting attack, to overthrow the Citadel they were intended to defend. Trinitarian doctrines it cannot be doubted, have suffered, and now suffer by these clauses: what alteration should be adopted may not be easy to decide. A simple resolution to do what is right, would no doubt lead to a proper course. I do not presume to suggest any myself, but I hope I have shewn that my Objections to these clauses are valid, and that *some* Alteration would be a Public Good.

ABSOLUTION.

The next point mentioned in the foregoing Petition is the Absolution in the Office for Visiting the Sick, which is as follows :—

“ Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power
“ to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly
“ repent and believe in him, of his great mercy
“ forgive thee thine offences ; and by his autho-
“ rity committed to me, I absolve thee from all
“ thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of
“ the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*”

I suppose that there are few persons who will contend that this Form can be defended in its full and literal sense as proper for any Minister to use—few Protestant Laymen who would wish to hear it pronounced—few Ministers of our Church who ever do use it. But here I may be met by an usual remark—Who takes this Form in its literal signification ? Who asserts that the Ministers of our Church have such a power as these words literally imply ? Why therefore raise an objection upon a conceded point ? To this I answer, that by our Subscription we have declared our approbation of it in some sense ; and, as I have already observed, no small harm is done to our reputation

by sanctioning that which in plain honest language cannot be defended. But a greater difficulty remains behind, one, for which I have in vain sought a solution. In what sense are the words retained? According to what interpretation are they defended at all? In the first place, if we go to the Scriptures themselves, from which they are in great part transcribed, who can fix the meaning of the expressions there? The best Commentators are divided upon them, and the power conveyed to St. Peter and the Apostles cannot be, beyond a doubt, defined. Was it a power to relax the obligations of the Mosaic Law, and to bind those of the Christian Covenant on the Primitive Converts? Was it a power to work miraculous cures, and to remove infirmities? Was it a power to exclude offenders from the Church upon earth as a prelude to their exclusion from heaven, and again to admit the penitent to his forfeited privileges? Which of these various senses (and there may be more) are to be adopted? And who shall authoritatively decide even upon the sense of Scripture in these passages; much less who shall venture to put them into the mouths of fallible men, and authorize them in any sense to apply them?

For many Centuries, Christians were wiser, because more cautious, than to venture thus far: it was not till the twelfth, a period when we shall not look for sound interpretation or just

application of Holy Writ, that such Forms of Absolution were used.

“In the XIIth Century,” says Bishop Burnet, “some few began to use the words ‘I absolve thee:’ yet to soften this expression that “seemed new and bold, some tempered it with “these words, ‘in so far as it is granted to my “frailty,’ and others with these words, ‘as far “as the accusation comes from thee, and as the “pardon is in me.’ Yet this form was but little “practised.”

Let it not be supposed that I would remove from the Priestly Office, that most gracious and acceptable part of it, the declaration of Pardon ; or that I would abate one tittle from the just authority of the Ministers of the Gospel. Far indeed am I from wishing to lower an Office which has been solemnly continued, with various degrees of utility indeed, from the first Preaching of our Divine Master to the present hour ; and which He, and his Apostles, in obedience to his commands, have directed to be conferred on faithful men, with a promise of Divine assistance, even unto the end of the world. I believe them to be in the fullest sense Ambassadors of Christ, and charged with a message of reconciliation : nor is there any part of their office more in accordance with the spirit of our Holy Faith, more suited to the wants of man, more in unison with the Will of God, than that which directs them to declare Pardon to the penitent.

But why assume to execute this in terms, which under any construction, are presumptuous; which the primitive Christians never thought of so applying, and which, so long as the Form is retained in our Prayer Book, seem like a wish to arrogate, or retain a power never thought of, till the worst, because the proudest ages of the Christian Church.

It may be thought extraordinary that our Reformers should have retained this Form; but it may be easily accounted for. They moved but slowly, more so than in any other Nation which favoured the Reformation, and allowed of several things not strictly justifiable, which might render the change more palatable.

A succession of Sovereigns also retained a fondness for many parts of the old system which the general voice of Protestants would have rejected. Henry VIII. Elizabeth, James, and Charles I. may all be included in this observation. Thus high notions of Priestly power were upheld. Moreover the people, as is natural, still wished for Absolution at the point of death, the very time when this Form was to be used; and when in 1689 a wise Alteration was attempted in this, as in other parts of the Liturgy, it was overborne by Party violence. But who would not rejoice to see that form of Absolution substituted which was then proposed; I mean the form in the Communion Service, one which embraces all that a Christian can desire to hear,

all that a Minister should dare to use? “ Al-
“ mighty God our heavenly Father, who of his
“ great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins
“ to all them that with hearty repentance and
“ true faith turn unto him have mercy upon you ;
“ pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
“ confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
“ and bring you to everlasting life, through
“ Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*”

But if such a change as this, or any other change, cannot be allowed, is it unreasonable for the Writer of these pages to ask for his own satisfaction, and, as he believes for the advantage of the Church to which he belongs, in what sense the present form of Absolution in the office for Visiting the Sick, is retained, and in what sense he is called upon to subscribe his approbation of it ?

ORDINATION.

The parts of the Ordination Services which are objected to in the foregoing Petition, are those marked in Italics below :—

In the Ordering of Priests.

“ *Receive the Holy Ghost* for the Office and
 “ Work of a Priest now committed unto thee
 “ by the imposition of our hands: *Whose sins*
 “ *thou dost forgive they are forgiven, and whose*
 “ *sins thou dost retain they are retained*; and be
 “ thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of his
 “ Holy Sacraments, in the name of the Father,
 “ and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

In the Consecration of Bishops.

“ *Receive the Holy Ghost* for the Office and
 “ Work of a Bishop in the Church of God now
 “ committed unto thee by the imposition of our
 “ hands; in the name of the Father, and of the
 “ Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. And
 “ remember that thou stir up *the grace of God*
 “ *which is given thee by this imposition of our*

“ *hands* : for God hath not given us the spirit of “ fear, but of power and love and soberness.”

It is with pain and reluctance that I advance any thing which seems to condemn Services in their general tenor so excellent and impressive, so truly Evangelical, as those by which Candidates are admitted into the different Orders of the Ministry in our Church. Yet, the parts to which my exceptions are directed, must surely at once strike every plain Christian as too presumptuous for the use of man : nor can I see in what sense, according to the received meaning of words, they can properly be defended.

It is usually, and in the main justly advanced, by the Defenders of our Liturgy, that the English Reformers rejected the errors which the Church of Rome, in the presumptuous exercise of a plenary power, not only over the conscience of men, but even over the Bible itself, had imposed in the dark ages on the Christian World ;* but that they sought out amidst the dross, all that belonged to the purer and primitive times of Christianity, and retained whatever of Doctrine or Ceremony was sanctioned by such a test.

* I trust these remarks will not give offence, where none is intended—they are written in the hope that the best Roman Catholics would gladly witness the removal of the unscriptural pretensions retained in their Ritual—if I am correct in this hope, how little is there to impede an Union between us ?

On examining how far the Ordination Services correspond with such views, we are struck with a glaring inconsistency in the use of the words above alluded to—"Receive the Holy Ghost, &c."

I hope to make it appear beyond all doubt, that no such form of Ordination was ever thought of, nor any resembling it for Eleven Centuries after the publication of Christianity.

Of our own Church many Authors concur in the remark of Mr. Bingham, that "The solemnity in giving the Superior Orders was always performed by the Imposition of hands and Prayer," but I do not find in them the antient Forms of Ordination.

Bishop Burnet writes thus :—

"We affirm that Christ appointed a Succession of Pastors in different ranks to be continued in his Church, for the work of the Gospel and the care of Souls ; and that as the Apostles settled the Churches, they appointed different Orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons : and we believe that all who are dedicated to serve in these Ministries, after they are examined and judged worthy of them, ought to be separated to them by the imposition of hands and prayer. These were the only rites that we find practised by the Apostles. For many ages the Church of God used no other.

"All the antient rituals, and all those that

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"All the antient rituals, and all those that

“ treat of them for the first seven Centuries
 “ speak of nothing else as essential to Orders
 “ but Prayer and imposition of hands.

“ In the conclusion of the Office, a new Be-
 “ nediction was added ever since the twelfth
 “ Century. The Bishop alone lays on his
 “ hands and says ‘Receive the Holy Ghost :
 “ whose sins ye remit, they are remitted ; and
 “ whose sins ye retain, they are retained.’ ”

In another place he says, “ The chief excep-
 “ tion that can be made to the form of giving
 “ Orders amongst us, is to those words, Receive
 “ ye the Holy Ghost, which as it is no antient
 “ form, it not being above five hundred years
 “ old, so it is taken from words of our Saviour’s
 “ that the Church in her best times thought
 “ were not to be applied to this.”

But the Authority of Morinus must I suppose,
 be considered conclusive on this point. He col-
 lected, for a particular object, the various
 forms of Ordination, in the Greek and Latin
 and other Churches, from Manuscripts of great
 Antiquity, some being at that time nine hun-
 dred years old. They were published by him
 about 1655.

That no doubt might remain, that I might
 not be guilty of any error or mis-statement, I
 have examined all those of the Greek and Latin
 Churches ; and in none does any such Form
 appear, as that used by our own Church, till
 the time above stated, namely about the twelfth

Century. A contrary spirit indeed is so evident, that I am tempted to trouble my readers with a partial translation of two which may be interesting and are applicable to the subject.

The first is from a Greek Manuscript of the Century IX. containing an Account of the manner of Ordination then practised in that Church.

“ The Archbishop having his hand upon the head of him who is Ordained thus prays :—

“ Oh God, our Saviour, Lord of all, do Thou by the advent of thine enlivening spirit, fill this thy Servant, whom Thou has made worthy to undertake the Office of Deacon, with faith, and Charity, and power, and Sanctification. For not by the imposition of my hands, but by the Visitation of the riches of thy Mercy is Grace granted unto those who are worthy of Thee ; so that cleansed from all sin, he may be presented to Thee blameless in the terrible day of Thy Judgment, and may receive the reward of Thy promise which cannot deceive.

“ For Thou art our God, a God of pity and of Salvation, for ever and ever, &c.”

The following is a Translation from a Manuscript of the Latin Church of Century IX. which contains the Form of Ordination then used in England. Though not unexceptionable, it shews the spirit in which the Consecration of a Bishop was then performed.

“ The Archbishop alone shall say this Conse-

“ cration, the rest standing around, and two
 “ Bishops holding the Gospel over him who is
 “ to be Ordained.

“ Holy Father, Almighty God, —— grant
 “ that this Thy Servant may be Consecrated by
 “ Thee to the highest office of the Priesthood into
 “ which he is now received. May Thy blessing
 “ be upon him, although it be by our hand.—
 “ Instruct him, Oh Lord, to feed Thy sheep,
 “ and grant that as an anxious Shepherd he
 “ may watch over the flock committed unto
 “ him. May the Holy Spirit, the divider of
 “ Spiritual gifts be with him, that, as the
 “ chosen Teacher of the Gentiles has ordained,
 “ he may be rich in justice, in kindness, in
 “ hospitality. May he hold fast zeal in his Ex-
 “ hortations, faith in persecutions, patience in
 “ Charity, constancy in Truth. Grant him in
 “ judgment to be kind and merciful. Lastly
 “ may he learn, from Thee the Giver, whatever
 “ he may profitably teach unto Thy people.
 “ May he consider the Priesthood a labour, and
 “ not a dignity. May an encrease of honour
 “ attend him to the encrease of his merits, that
 “ thus, as he is now admitted by us into the
 “ Priesthood, he may by Thee be admitted into
 “ Thy kingdom, through our Lord, &c.”

Having thus shewn how little our own Forms of Ordination agree with those of the earlier ages, I shall now only advert to one modern Authority in confirmation of my views. Who-

ever desires the extension of the Christian Faith, and partakes of that attachment to our own Church which, notwithstanding a few blemishes, I most sincerely profess, can hardly fail to take a lively interest in the labours of our Brethren in America. The firm root which the Episcopal Church has established in that Country, the wide spreading branches which it is now sending forth, and the excellent fruits which adorn their growth, must render its proceedings both interesting and instructive to ourselves. I have not before alluded to its Liturgy, but many alterations which are therein adopted are well worthy of our serious consideration.

It appears that the objection now advanced against our Form for Ordaining Priests has been acknowledged by that Church; and another Form has been provided to be used at the discretion of the Bishop, from which every objectionable, because presumptuous, expression is excluded. No similar alteration is provided for the Consecration of Bishops, but though there can be no doubt that they who considered alteration desirable in one case would own its propriety in the other so similar, it is easy to understand why they would be extremely averse to a change in that office by which the Founders of their Church, the first American Bishops, were admitted to their Order. The not substituting therefore another Form in this Service is easily accounted for, while the sober and unob-

jectionable alteration allowed in the Ordination of Priests sufficiently speaks the sentiments of men, who, we have good reason to believe have established a pure and Evangelical Episcopal Church, on the foundation of our own; differing only in the superstructure, where Truth required alterations which circumstances enabled them to discuss freely, and to decide upon with singleness of purpose.

I have only therefore to observe, that if we “ask of the antient time what is best, and of “the latter time what is fittest,” the conclusion would be that some Alteration is both proper and expedient in the Forms to which I am now alluding.

If such a conclusion be rejected by Those to whom the power of change is confided, I trust I may be at least justified in respectfully requesting to be informed in what sense I am expected to subscribe, before I am obliged to surrender my Profession, my Employment, and my Income.

THE LITURGY.

Having in the three last Chapters stated at large certain objections which affect a person obliged to Subscribe his approbation of the whole Liturgy, in terms far more strict than was intended by its original Framers, I have now to offer a remark to which I request the candid and serious attention of all who may chance to read these pages.

If these, which a sense of duty obliges me to notice, are all the solid objections which can be advanced by a person who, as some may think, has with an over scrupulousness sought after difficulties, surely this is some testimony to the excellence of the whole Prayer Book. If a Form of Devotion compiled under all the disadvantages which encompassed the English Reformers, contains so little that is objectionable, how extraordinary must be the merit of a Composition which can thus bear the test of ages, and afford such slender grounds for censure or exception. Under present circumstances, I trust I may claim credit for sincerity. There may be some few other parts of our Liturgy and Articles in which I should consider some altera-

tion both an ease and a benefit, but if there was any to which I could not Subscribe, with such a latitude as seems to me allowable, can it be supposed that I should now be silent? To the *Laity* then let me further observe, that of the three objections I *have* advanced, one only can closely affect *them*. The Athanasian Creed forms a part of their Public Worship; but the other Forms apply to those who as Ministers have to join in their use, and to Subscribe *ex animo* their approbation of them. On the Laity therefore these cannot press so as to impede Communion with our Church: for the Communion of a Layman is a very different thing from the solemn Test demanded of a Clergyman.

There may be many who will condemn my present course though of my motives they cannot judge: but I should indeed have cause to condemn myself if I failed in expressing my entire conviction that no Nation can possess a Church which is, on the whole, better entitled to its attachment. I believe its Public Worship to be, in the main, excellent and edifying, although capable of, and requiring Improvement. I believe its Doctrine to be pure and Scriptural, and, with the exceptions already named, the following Sentiments contained in "the Preface to the Common Prayer," seem to me such as no Christian should hesitate to embrace, "that the Book doth not contain in it any thing contrary to the Word of God or to sound

“ Doctrine, or which a godly man may not
 “ with a good conscience use and submit to, or
 “ which is not fairly defensible against any that
 “ shall oppose the same; if it shall be allowed,
 “ such just and favourable construction as in
 “ common equity ought to be allowed to all hu-
 “ man Writings.”

But I have in a former page observed, that there are nevertheless some things which occasionally operate in creating a distaste to our Services, and though I should sincerely regret to suggest objections in any quarter where they have not hitherto been felt, several circumstances urge me not to withhold the grounds of this observation.*

Would that I could join in the sanguine views of Bishop Burnet, that such Alterations can be effected as would bring the greater part of our Dissenting Brethren to unite with us in Christian Worship, but better times may arise, and however adverse the prospect, the duty of leading “ brethren to dwell together in unity,” is one which should never be absent from the mind of a Christian. It is easy but it is indolent to say, without an effort, that “ there will always be “ differences.” The real differences of sincere men, would they confer in a Christian spirit, are but few: the anxious endeavour after concii-

* Unfortunately there is no other Channel but the Press, through which a Clergyman can propose the consideration of any Improvement, or ascertain the Sentiments of his Brethren.

liation must be at least a profitable task, and if one step be made towards it, good seed is sown ; and “ without observation,” the fruit may ripen hereafter, and by a larger union strengthen the Christian exertions of this enterprising nation.

But other reasons urge me to offer these remarks. These are enquiring days : and many things which formerly passed without observation, are now sifted to the utmost ; and it is evidently the interest of all who are concerned in the welfare of Public Institutions, to place them on such a footing as will bear the light, and present a clear ground of defence to those who desire their continuance. It is hardly to be expected, when the affairs of the Church occupy so much of the general attention, that its Public Worship, its Rites and Ceremonies should in the end escape observation. From what quarter would the Christian and the Churchman desire that the Enquiry should commence. Few, I think, can hesitate to answer, *from its Ministers*. It is in this conviction that I venture respectfully to suggest to those who are now my Brethren, the propriety of considering whether it be not a wiser and a better course, to be themselves the first to deliberate and to act.

In addition to this it should be remembered, that the subject is already opened. Already several Publications have appeared, and various changes have been advocated. I trust I may be excused for remarking freely in a mat-

ter where opinions will of course differ, that so far as I have read, more is proposed than is necessary or desirable ; and if one word that I can offer may in any degree *stay* the desire for change in so weighty a matter as the Public Worship of God, it would more than repay me for the uneasiness which I feel, in presuming to be the Advocate of *any* Alteration.

Without professing therefore to notice every particular which might be amended, and leaving it much to the judgment of others to discover arguments for or against what I propose, I shall only briefly notice the few points where I have long thought alteration desirable, with a view of promoting a more Spiritual Worship, and the better Edification of the People.

The Calendar of Lessons from the Old Testament might be greatly improved by a better selection for *some* Sundays, and by excluding the Apochryphal Books.

Throughout the Prayers a series of "*verbal*" Alterations, if I may so class them, might be recommended, the propriety of which strikes every attentive reader.—These may seem of little moment, but if it were considered how commonly particular expressions are laid hold of as grounds of attack or of ridicule, and how many a good Churchman in humble life is perplexed by the impossibility of defending them, there would, I think, be no hesitation in wishing them expunged.

The next point requires a fuller notice, I mean the whole Morning Service as now performed in our Church. Our Reformers certainly never contemplated such a combination of three distinct Services in one, and for the poor, the most numerous class of those whose high interests we have to promote, it is not, I am convinced, a profitable union. It may be said, we seldom hear any complaint, but is it sufficiently calculated, how many silently absent themselves from the Service because it is not attractive, though possessing within itself, under a better arrangement, all the materials of attraction to a religious mind? It is too great a demand upon the attention, and when concluded with a Sermon, (not to mention the administration of the Sacrament) greater than can be expected from a general Congregation of all ages and degrees of advancement in a religious life, whose improvement we have to consider even more than that of the confirmed Christian.*

The cause of this, the uniting three Services into one, has been adverted to—what is the result? Several repetitions occur which were never intended. Two different Creeds are used

* It is moreover a heavy exertion for many Clergymen to commence with, some of whom, from the encreasing desire for Evening Prayers, are engaged in three Services every Sunday, besides other Ecclesiastical Duties. A Sermon is now almost always expected: formerly they were much less frequent.

on the same occasion. If desirable to retain both, one might be removed to the afternoon Service. Again, we sometimes hear besides a Prayer for the Royal Family, and another for the Parliament, four different Prayers for the King,* and thus the whole assumes rather too much the appearance of a State matter, instead of presenting throughout as the most prominent objects, the Word of God and the Spiritual Wants and Duties of his People. It is well known that the Primitive Christians were always most exact in obeying the Apostolical precept that intercession should be made for Kings, and for all that are in Authority, and our Reformers added to this feeling a desire of publicly acknowledging the Supremacy of the King as the Head of our Church; but neither the one nor the other would have proposed those repetitions which are now heard in our Morning Prayer. One simple unaffected Petition for their present and eternal welfare would probably be better in unison with the feelings of the high Individuals belonging to the Royal Family of this kingdom.

Another remark may be added, which applies to the Inhabitants of this and some other parts of England. From various causes the Morning Service is not nearly so well attended as the Afternoon or Evening. Thus it comes to

* In Cathedrals and some other Churches frequently.

pass, that many seldom hear either the Litany or the Altar Service. Would it be adviseable not to confine the use of these to the Morning, but to allow them to be read alternately at different times of the day?

So far as the Public Worship is concerned these are all the material Alterations which seem desirable, and if executed with "a single eye," would, I firmly believe, lead to a more comprehensive, as well as a more Spiritual Worship in our Churches.

I come now to speak of the Occasional Offices, and commence with the Administration of the Sacrament of Baptism, and when I remark that it is impossible to obey the directions of our Church without hardship and even injustice, here is sufficient ground for requesting some Alteration.

The Rubrics, which to Clergymen are LAWS, enjoin with evident propriety that this solemn initiation into the Christian profession should be publicly performed at the Font, according to the excellent Forms of Prayer provided for that purpose. They require also three Sponsors, who undertake in terms with which no thinking person can lightly comply, that each child shall be brought up in a godly and Christian manner till of age to answer for itself.

The Canons of our Church forbid the admission of Parents to this office, and lastly, the administering of Private Baptism is forbidden except in cases of urgent necessity.

When we come to put into execution these Regulations, we are frequently met by an insuperable difficulty, and are left without any satisfactory alternative. There is a very extensive disinclination in all Classes, and especially amongst the Poor, to undertake the Office of Godfathers and Godmothers; arising, as I firmly believe, in numerous instances from a conscientious scruple as to being bound before God by promises which there is a doubt of being able to perform. Such scruples ought to be respected; and no task could be more unsatisfactory than the endeavour to overcome them for the purpose of completing a prescribed Form. To witness the dedication of a young Christian to the Service of his Master, when we have ground to hope that Christian Sponsors sincerely pledge themselves to watch over his eternal interests, if required, during his tender years, is a truly gratifying sight: but many children are so unfortunately circumstanced that they have no religious friends ready to appear for them—are they therefore not to be baptized, or is there any satisfaction in prevailing upon unthinking persons to incur solemn pledges which we are assured they will immediately

forget, if even they once comprehend their nature ?*

It is, I believe, mainly from difficulties of this kind that a practice has arisen, which many of the Clergy most unwillingly adopt, and which is certainly to be regretted, as it lowers the character of a solemn Ceremony. Unable in many cases to procure the attendance of Sponsors, and unwilling to refuse the Rite, they have suffered Private and Vestry Baptisms to grow into a custom, and these, as sometimes performed, seem little more than a mere Registry.

When we remember the terms in which Baptism was first enjoined, and is always spoken of in the New Testament—when we observe the importance which our Church accordingly attaches to its proper celebration, as the beginning of a dedication to God, to be continued to the grave, and when from this we turn to the present too-prevailing practice of our Church, there is perhaps no part of our whole system which presents so unsatisfactory an appearance.

The requiring three Sponsors for every Child, and forbidding Parents to appear in that Character, are generally, but incorrectly, concluded to be derived from the primitive ages.

* In some Parishes I have heard that the Clerk officiates as Sponsor where no other can be obtained ; this is indeed to retain the “ form ” without “ the power.”

The origin, of the first, according to the authority of Wheatley, can only be traced to the 13th century; and the latter, it seems, was first introduced into our Church by a Canon of 1603. Augustine, the Historian and the Advocate of the Ecclesiastical Politie of the *fourth* Century, informs us, that in Baptism one Sponsor only was required, and that the Father or Mother generally officiated. Dr. Secker, in his Lectures on the Catechism, in like manner remarks that Parents were antiently the persons who at Baptism represented and promised for their children. If then the example of primitive times be admitted as a safe guide and a declared precedent for our Institutions, the difficulties which now prevent the decorous and regular celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism might, in great measure, be easily removed, for Parents would, no doubt, very generally answer for their Children. Nor does there seem any just reason why we should hesitate to provide a Form of Baptism where, from the loss of Parents or other cause, *no* Sponsor could be had; and if the Alterations now proposed were adopted, and the attendance of Sponsors recommended, "where they can be obtained," it is probable that a more general desire would arise to provide them; and the office, no longer imposed as necessary to Baptism, but as a highly beneficial concomitant, would be placed on its just footing. Solemn pledges would not so

often be given without a meaning attached to them, and when given they would be considered as really binding on the conscience, *so far as circumstances in after life might allow*,—the reasonable construction now affixed to the Duty by all who undertake with any reflection the office of Godfather or Godmother.

Augustin has, in that part of his works already mentioned, recorded an Answer given to a Person who desired a Justification of the *Questions* proposed in Baptism.* His solution can hardly be considered as satisfactory, because it is not sufficiently obvious to those who are required to answer them. Slight verbal alterations would render these Questions more intelligible to every capacity.

I am unwilling to quit this subject without some reference to a term which has caused so much division as that of “regeneration;” and I cannot help asking whether a *large part* of the discussion it has occasioned, is not after all “a question of words?” Is it not then to be regretted that an expression, found but twice in the New Testament, and once only with a plain reference to Baptism, and which is often used in another sense by the best Theologians, should occasion such divisions? Might not every benefit which we ascribe to Baptism be expressed without appearing to confine the term “re-

* See Bingham on Baptism.

generation" within limits which Scripture does not sanction? Surely, in difficult points, a National Liturgy should consult every diversity of feeling,, so far as it may be done without compromising Truth.

Nor can I help remarking to those who disapprove of Infant Baptism, that our Church *recommends* but does not *require* it.

In the first Prayer of the office for Confirmation, there is an expression which I imagine all would wish to be removed. To declare of any number of persons, that God has granted forgiveness of all their sins, without at the same time mentioning those limitations and conditions which we know to be intended, to say the least, carries with it a presumptuous appearance.

On the Marriage Service I have but little to offer; its faults, arising from the use of obsolete language and expressions which require considerable explanation to render intelligible, are generally acknowledged; and it is not probable that a Revisal of the Liturgy would be contemplated without a determination to correct them.

In the very beautiful Office for the Visitation of the Sick, I have already noticed the only part which can be objected to, and can but repeat the hope that the change as to the Absolution proposed in 1689 would be readily adopted.

The Burial Service has been objected to from reasons, alas ! which too often occur. When used by *Christians* over the grave of a *Christian* there is scarce a word in its sublime and consolatory Prayers which we could wish to alter. It is mournful to reflect that it should require to be accommodated to the case of those, over whose remains we hardly dare to utter a Christian's hope.

The Communion Service is probably but little known. The annual expression of a desire to revive Christian Discipline, seems little suited to our times. The Sermon, with which it concludes, is perhaps one of the finest combinations of Scriptural admonitions in our language. It is to be regretted that it is not more frequently addressed to our Congregations.

The Forms of Ordination have been already considered ; it remains therefore only to notice the Services provided for several Public Occasions, at the end of the Prayer Book. In three of these are undoubtedly found expressions, which, adopted in the warmth of feeling generated by the events that produced them, require those qualifications which a sober Review would suggest. Their disuse has been advocated by some, and they are now but little attended to : but they are solemn notices of events which ought not to be forgotten : they present many a useful warning to those who are disposed to learn wisdom from the past, and may teach us

to value many a blessing which a kind Providence still continues to our Land, and of which may we never be bereaved by our own folly and ingratitude.

Having thus ventured to propose, in general terms, the alterations which seem to me plainly desirable, I have only again to request a candid and impartial judgment on the foregoing pages. They are offered, not in a presumptuous reliance on my own judgment, not from a heedless love of innovation, but from a deliberate conviction that such changes, if effected, would be *real Improvements*. They are offered, I trust, in accordance with the Protestant spirit which our Church has always professed, and which is publicly acknowledged in that Book on which I have ventured to comment—and though I am conscious how little I possess any qualifications which can render me the guide of others, the following sentiments may I hope justify this entreaty, that the subject now under discussion may occupy the thoughts of those whose decision I humbly await, and who are the constituted Rulers and Spiritual Heads of our Church.

“ It hath been the wisdom of the Church of
 “ England ever since the first compiling of her
 “ Public Liturgy to keep the mean between the
 “ two extremes of too much stiffness in refusing,
 “ and of too much easiness in admitting, any
 “ variation from it. For as on the one side

“ common experience sheweth, that when a
 “ change hath been made of things advisedly
 “ established (no evident necessity so requiring)
 “ sundry inconveniences have thereupon en-
 “ sued ; and those many times more and greater
 “ than the evils that were intended to be reme-
 “ died by such a change : so on the other side
 “ the particular forms of Divine Worship, and
 “ the Rites and Ceremonies appointed to be
 “ used therein, being things in their own nature
 “ indifferent and alterable, and so acknow-
 “ ledged ; it is but reasonable that upon weighty
 “ and important considerations, according to
 “ the various exigency of times and occasions,
 “ such changes and alterations should be made
 “ therein, as to those that are in place of autho-
 “ rity, should from time to time seem either
 “ necessary or expedient.”*

* Preface to the Prayer-Book.

GENERAL IMPROVEMENTS.

If, in offering the foregoing Remarks, I have proceeded with a reluctance, which only necessity could overcome, it is undoubtedly with encreased diffidence, that I enter upon the General Improvements desirable in our Church. Yet there are some matters of such immediate interest, that in speaking at all of Ecclesiastical Affairs, I could hardly be silent without creating suspicions unfair towards myself. I have already stated, that if Clergymen had an easy mode of laying their opinions before the Public, they would be found the Advocates of all that can help to extend the influence of Religion. It might be said, an opportunity now offers itself of proving this in your own case and you decline it. You are anxious for some Alterations, but by your silence as to those which the Public most desire, you shew your unwillingness to receive them.

I have indeed no hope that I can advance a word which can throw new light on such subjects, but if any thing that I can offer may lead even one individual to a just decision, then it will not have been useless to shew what are the

sentiments which *one* Clergyman entertains and avows, in the confident expectation that many others will not disown them.

Perhaps, from my present situation, I may claim the credit of reviewing impartially some of the points which are now debated. Having long felt, and have now at length declared the opinions contained in a former part of this Publication, I must be dull indeed not to have anticipated the sacrifice which *may* be required of me. On all that relates therefore to the Emoluments of the Church, I may perhaps justly ask to be considered a more impartial, or at least, a less interested observer, than my Brethren, I fear, will be allowed to be, however unjustly such credit may be denied them.

Actuated then by no desire to catch the applause either of the Advocates or the Opponents of our Church, I proceed with a simple wish to state conscientiously whatever may advance the interests of Religion, and lead to an advantageous settlement of questions now before the Public.

In one of the two Notes appended to the Petition already inserted, I adverted to the removal of the few real Abuses remaining in our Establishment, and I added a wish that the Clergy should voluntarily come forward to promote it. This was printed in March, 1831. It is therefore but in justice to myself, having expressed such a wish, and it is but fair in answer to the

many who are constantly complaining that nothing is done, first to state what *has been* attempted, as far as I know, since that period.

A Report has been presented by Commissioners, the majority of whom are Bishops, for the Improvements of our Ecclesiastical Law.

A Bill has been proposed by the Archbishop of Canterbury for the Improvement of the Tythe System.

Another for the encrease of the Stipends of Ministers in certain special cases.

Another to regulate Pluralities.

That these Measures should not all have given satisfaction, ought to be no ground of surprise or complaint. It is not to be expected, that on such subjects the best Provisions can be immediately discovered and passed into a Law.

In addition to these Proposals, a Commission is employed, the majority of whom are Bishops, in enquiring into the Revenues of the Church.

The warmest advocates for Reform must therefore acknowledge, that some steps have been already taken, and by the Church, to introduce Alterations which are undoubtedly desired by the Nation.

It may seem presumptuous, after such an enumeration, that any individual should venture to suggest further Improvement. But as in *past* times it was the right of a private Clergyman both to speak and to vote on Ecclesiastical Affairs, so I trust it may be excused us in the

present, to adopt the only mode of proposing what appears advantageous. Before I proceed to name any further Improvements, and those which I would propose though extensive in their effects are not such as to alarm, it is desirable to take a clear view of the Duties of a National Church. What then is the end to be constantly proposed and advanced? The original object, and the constant aim, the Beginning and the End of all its concerns, seems to be simply this, *to Endeavour to bring home the Truths of Christianity to every Individual in the Land.* So far as this *Endeavour* is made, so far is the duty of a National Church adequately performed; so far is the System which it adopts a just return for the benefits it enjoys. Its failures then in this great attempt should be anxiously watched. Every change in the condition of the people should be met by an adequate provision.—Where new wants arise from an encreased demand upon the attention of its Ministers, to supply them should be the constant thought; and no trifling, no great difficulty should slacken the endeavour. Its* Services should be rendered comprehensive and attractive, its Places for Public Worship commodious, and even comfortable; and all its details, a System intended

* I am far from recommending a frequent change in our Religious Worship: but when change has become so difficult as to be almost impossible, this looks like assuming Infallibility.

for a whole Nation should, by every effort, be rendered equal to a Nation's Religious wants.

Bearing then in mind these, which I trust, are neither incorrect nor extravagant views of the duties of a National Church, there are perhaps a few points which require a better attention, in order to ensure their performance.—Those which have long occurred to me, may seem to others of less moment. I advance them from a conviction of their necessity.

The first I shall notice is the accommodation of the Poor in our Churches. I do not so much allude to the numerous cases still existing where a large population is without any place for Public Worship—there the evil is undisputed—but rather to those where there are Churches in which the Poor can find but little sitting-room, and that often of the most unsuitable description. Poor people are of course slower of apprehension than those who, more accustomed to read, more quickly imbibe information; yet they are too often placed at the greatest distance from the Reader, while the best parts of the Church are occupied by the large pews of the rich, who have room enough and to spare. It may be thought I am exaggerating this inconvenience. Should a general enquiry be made, and these are enquiries that ought to be thought of, I am persuaded it would be found that the Poor are ill supplied with Church-room both as to space, locality, and comfort. And

what can be more unsatisfactory than to know that the most numerous class in the country are not provided with tolerable means of obtaining Public Religious instruction.* It may be answered that the appropriation of seats is placed by law out of the reach of the Minister; but if it be a part of our duty to preach the Gospel to the Poor, should it not be a primary object to obtain such an alteration of the law as may help to effect it? As connected with this, I cannot help adverting to another trifling point as it may appear, but not trifling if its consequences are universally estimated; I mean, *Officiating audibly*, another important object for the Poor. Bishop Sumner remarks, in the excellent Introduction to his "Apostolical Preaching," that "we do not hear a Lawyer "blamed for pleading earnestly in his Client's "cause." Where no earnestness, and no exertion are seen, it is hardly possible to believe that a Minister is really anxious to instruct and to persuade.

Another circumstance which renders the influence of our Church in many instances less conducive than it ought to be to its main design, is the overlooking the systematic connection which it supposes through life between the Clergyman and his flock. If we examine

* In some of the large Parishes in Norwich, the Poor have little, almost no accommodation.

the general plan which our Reformers have handed down to us, we shall see that it implies a Religious association between the People and the Church in every period, almost in every event of life. Children are brought to Baptism, in maturer years to Confirmation, a rite which, if it could be more frequently and sedately performed, would be more thoughtfully received. The next step is the Invitation to the Holy Communion, an invitation which is often not thought of, much less universally tendered as it ought to be. For many of the most interesting events of after life, a religious Service is provided, intended to preserve the religious association, and affording to the Minister a legitimate opportunity of strengthening or establishing an Union, comprizing within itself incalculable benefits.* It is the having lost sight of this, to which must be attributed in a large degree the decay of the influence of our Church ;

* Excellent Schools, under the care of the Clergy, are become very general : but with the education, the connection with the children, and consequently the influence, too often ceases. So strongly is this felt, that the National Society has of late particularly enquired what means have been successfully tried to extend this influence beyond early years. The true means undoubtedly are, the continued exercise of a personal superintendence, the continued manifestation of a personal interest in their welfare. If the Author be here considered to assume too much the character of a Censor, he hopes he may disarm such Criticism by humbly acknowledging his own deficiency in a matter of whose importance recent observation has more fully convinced him.

an influence which can only be restored by the recollection that the Ministry is a Business, an Employment, a Profession—that it has its constant routine of duties and attentions requisite to preserve unbroken that golden chain which, uniting the believer to the Church upon Earth, prepares for a future union, the ultimate desire of our labours, with the great Shepherd of all in Heaven.

When we seek to realize such views, when acknowledging their justice, we consider how they are to be promoted, on the very threshold of the enquiry, one unalterable condition, essential to success, at once presents itself. The Minister must live amongst those to whom he owes such duties. We establish then at once the necessity of *Residence* : and when we ask, why is there not a resident Minister in every Parish, we come at once to the question of *Pluralities*. Amidst all the blended truth and falsehood which is now current on these two prevailing topics, how much is it to be desired, that there were on the one hand a juster view of the evils complained of, and on the other a decided resolution to remedy them. It is unnecessary to descant on the evils of Non-residence. That every Congregation should have its Minister at hand to attend to their spiritual, and, as far as he can, to their temporal necessities, is a truth so interwoven with every notion we can form of Religious superintendence, that it would

be idle to waste a line in argument upon it.—How such a desideratum can be supplied is a very different matter. It is easy to inveigh against Pluralities, but they who know how large a proportion of the Parishes in this Kingdom are not endowed with even a decent maintenance for a Clergyman, much less with an Income which will allow of Residence and of Charity, will pause before they require a sweeping Enactment that no Pluralities shall exist.—I will advance no calculations, because the Enquiry now going on renders it unnecessary; I assume as an undoubted fact, which that Enquiry will confirm, that a large number of Parishes are so circumstanced; nor will I enter upon the consideration how far Pluralities, as they now exist, might be justified, because a Measure has been proposed by the Heads of the Church for restraining and regulating them.—The subject is thus fairly opened for discussion, and it is not only allowable, it is the duty of every friend to Religion to advocate the best remedy for the evils they have entailed: nor will any measure be satisfactory, it ought not to be so, which does not go to the root of the evil, and carry on the face of it an evident and comprehensive cure.

It is with such views that I venture to advert to one of the Provisions of the Bill proposed for this purpose; and I speak the sentiments of Clergymen far better able to judge than myself,

when I say, that *the subject having been opened*, the clause which allows a Clergyman under certain conditions to hold two Livings below a certain value, provided they are not more than 30 miles distant, is not satisfactory. The religious and temporal wants of a Parish removed thirty miles from its appointed Minister do not reach him in such a manner as to create responsibility and ensure attention. It is useless, it is wrong to disguise the fact. It is a distance preventing frequent communication, which, so long as man is man, permits duties to be overlooked which are not brought under immediate observation.

On the other hand, let it be fairly considered in what do unjustifiable Pluralities consist.—The Plurality to which a Christian should object, does not consist in the Parochial Names attached within certain boundaries: it is not the quantity of acres which defines the just limits of a Clergyman's superintendence: it is the Plurality of Souls under the care of one man, which requires to be looked to; and while the duty of *dividing* populous Parishes is acknowledged, there is equal wisdom in *uniting* others, and not burthening every tract of land known by a certain name, with a House, which at present there are no Funds to build, and which, if built, would only cause an inconvenient subtraction from resources which might be better employed.

What then seems the wise and effective remedy? Let not Houses be multiplied where there is not at present an Income to support them. Let poor Livings be held by a neighbouring Minister, within a moderate distance, even if he holds a good Benefice, for thus the wants of the people are better met. Thus the responsibility for the adequate discharge of duty would always rest on the Incumbent, even if in part performed by a Curate: and Curates no longer placed at a distance, subject, with small means, to extensive claims, would then be employed in their regular occupation, in communication with their Rector, and better able, when themselves promoted, to execute their own Parochial Duties.*

Yet, if these proposals appear satisfactory, let it not be supposed that they can easily be effected, and let not those be blamed who have not at once proposed so decisive a remedy.—The difficulties are obvious. A very extensive Exchange of Preferment, in itself an evil, must be allowed and even facilitated. Much property now invested would be affected—a

* Both the Canons and the Form of Dispensation require *present* Incumbents to reside a part of the year on their second Benefice, if they hold two, and in many cases where there is a habitable Parsonage this is practised. Yet it may fairly be questioned whether it would be advantageous to enforce universally a rule which would occasion much inconvenience to the resident Curate. Would not the cost of the removal be better bestowed in charity on the Parish?

great alteration must ensue in the situation of many, who are brought up with certain prospects. How then, it may be said, can such proposals be justified? Because the evil of Pluralities as they now exist, is generally acknowledged, and a remedy has been declared necessary by the Heads of the Church; because no remedy ought to be satisfactory which is not comprehensive; because the present system of Pluralities has grown up, in part, from an abuse of the Law, which though it sanctions holding more than one Living, applies to a Valuation which no longer describes the real Income; because, lastly, the Population of the Country is so encreased, that more resident Ministers are required. It is on these, as well as other grounds already mentioned, that I would advocate such changes, but undoubtedly with every consideration both as to time and property, which ought in justice to be allowed.

Still it must be granted, that even the Plan now proposed would not fully meet the evil to be remedied: it would not provide that which can alone satisfy the just expectations of the people; expectations which are creditable, because they imply a wish to see a Resident Religious teacher for every numerous Congregation. There are undoubtedly many Parishes with a large Population and a very small Clerical Income, which could not with propriety be *united* to another: and here I venture again to express

my regret that more has not been formerly attempted to encrease the Endowments of Churches so circumstanced. If any such Measure is now in preparation, it is to be lamented that a project so acceptable has not been in some way communicated to the Public. I do not venture to suggest any on my own authority ; one has been long agitated, which I know would be acceptable to some who would have largely to contribute towards it, I mean a new Valuation of the Tenths, which are appropriated to this object by Law. It is not necessary for me to speak of the propriety of this measure ; Dr. Burton, a Clergyman of high character has published a Pamphlet almost for the sole purpose of recommending it. It has been since objected that it would be an unjust diminution of existing Incomes—this undoubtedly should be considered. So far as I can judge, his proposal would be met with a cordial liberality by present Possessors.

The views now advanced may be considered by some as an unjust interference with the Property of the Church. So much has lately been said and written on this subject, that it is almost necessary for a Clergyman to have formed some opinion upon it. I do not presume to enter upon the various pleadings which might be advanced on either side. The following sentiments, contained in a Charge of the present Bishop of Lincoln, whose judgment and in-

formation and deep interest in the advancement of Religion are well known, seem to place the matter on its true and indisputable footing. They were offered indeed only with a reference to the stipends of Curates, but whether so intended by his Lordship or not, may be received as a *general* conclusion :—

“ On this subject two opposite opinions have
 “ been maintained, both, as it appears to me,
 “ equally remote from the truth. The one, by
 “ those, who assert that Ecclesiastical Property
 “ is at the absolute disposal of the State;
 “ which may at pleasure take any part, or even
 “ the whole, and divert it to secular purposes.
 “ The other, by those who contend that Eccle-
 “ siastical stands on precisely the same footing
 “ as Lay Property ; and that, as the State does
 “ not attempt to prescribe the mode in which
 “ the Layman shall discharge the obligations
 “ necessarily attaching to the possession of Pro-
 “ perty, it ought to maintain the same prudent
 “ reserve in the case of the Clergy, and to leave
 “ them to the admonitions of their own con-
 “ science, and to their sense of duty. The cor-
 “ rect view of the subject lies, in my opinion,
 “ between these two extremes. The property
 “ of the Church was originally conferred by
 “ those who had a right to confer it, but with a
 “ condition annexed to the gift—the condition
 “ of communicating religious instruction to the
 “ People. The State is the Trustee, charged

“with the office of taking care, on the
 “one hand, that the Property is preserved in-
 “violate and entire, and on the other, that the
 “condition 'on which it was given is punctually
 “fulfilled. When, therefore, the State inter-
 “poses for the purpose of enforcing the resi-
 “dence of the Clergy, and the regular per-
 “formance of the Ministerial Functions, or of
 “securing adequate Stipends to the Curates of
 “non-resident Incumbents, it only acts in the
 “discharge of its bounden duty, and exercises
 “its legitimate superintendence over the appli-
 “cation of the temporalities of the Church.”

It may be expected that I should say something on the general execution of Clerical duties ; but upon this, as I can be no judge of the manner in which they are universally performed, so, I certainly will not assume to be the censor of any. That there are complaints on this score it is needless to deny—but they are not to be heard with unmixed regret. The quick censure of the Public implies at least an interest in Religion, and supplies what we must all acknowledge we always require—an excitement to exertion. When happily a religious feeling prevails in the country, the best persons will most anxiously desire to see Ministerial duties adequately fulfilled ; but they will be too wise to expect perfection from any human institution ; too charitable to withhold the just allowance that ought to be conceded to human in-

firmity. Fully to meet and improve the religious disposition of those amongst whom we are placed, should be our earnest endeavour, and a failure in this our deepest regret. The severest Critic of Clerical negligence will, on the one hand, allow that the Clergy are an improved and improving Body. Had they been what they are even now, fifty years ago, how different would be the state of Public opinion? On the other hand, there is one fact which cannot be too strongly stated, too anxiously considered. Wherever its duties are carefully performed by its Ministers, there a corresponding good feeling towards the Church is seldom wanting, is often most gratefully expressed.—To secure then the approbation even of the irreligious, and to recal an estranged affection, rests mainly with ourselves. Neglect will seldom escape an overflowing measure of condemnation, and the respect which accompanies attention, promises an adequate return, even in this world, for every exertion in the purest and the highest of human occupations.

Another point on which it is scarcely possible to be silent, in speaking of Ecclesiastical affairs, is that of Tithes. The few remarks that I have to offer have no pretensions to novelty; they are dictated only by an anxious desire to conciliate, and to do justice to *all Parties* who are concerned in this subject. They who daily assert that the Clergy are guilty of every species

of avarice and extortion, that Tithes must be abolished, and the Property of the Church confiscated to the State, are little likely to attend to any thing I may advance. To that respectable, and I hope still numerous class, who from upright motives desire Public Improvements, conceived in thought and executed with justice, I address myself, as a warm partaker of the same feelings.

Many objections have been offered to the whole system of Tithes. Putting myself into the place of a *Payer* instead of a *Receiver*, in some of them I entirely concur; for others I can see no justification. If land worth 30s. an acre pays 25s. to one owner, and 5s. to another, who happens to be the Clergyman, I can see no grievance of any kind. But I can see a hardship if a Tenant, taking Lands on Lease, and contemplating a system of high farming, agrees to 25s. an acre for the Rent, but can make no binding agreement as to the Composition for Tithe; if he is liable on this head to an increased claim any or every year, arbitrarily imposed, and if not acceded to, levied by an injurious and irritating process.* That some legal

* The gathering of Tithes, I have understood, is not objected to in some parts of the Country, and regularly practised. In this District it is certainly much disliked. Clergymen, perhaps, are not sufficiently aware how disagreeable it is to a Farmer to know that he has this rod hanging over his head. Much of the present hostility to Tithes may arise from the feeling that each Clergy-

mode, therefore, of granting a Lease of Tithes has not been long ago devised, is much to be regretted

Again, if on every £100 expended on the improvement of land, a Clergyman can immediately come in and claim an encrease of composition, this is also a hardship. Such a demand, I hope, is exacted only by the illiberal and avaricious, whom I believe to be few ; but it is the avarice of a few which has brought discredit on the whole Body of the Clergy and on the system of Tithes. That this point therefore should be regulated, seems only just and equitable to the Farmer, and due to the general reputation of the Clergy.

We often, however, hear a *Commutation* of Tithes recommended, though without very clear views from those who speak of it. If by a Commutation, it is desired to see an equivalent given in Land, it seems useless to discuss the point, as it is probably impossible to prevail on Owners to part with it. If the object is to substitute a *fixed* annual payment in money equal to their present value, it does not seem that such a plan would be advantageous to the Landowner, even if it were unobjectionable to the Clergy. Lord Dacre's Commutation Bill proposes to fix a certain proportion of Rent, ac-

man possesses this unpopular power. The recovery, however, of a Tithe Composition, ought to be placed on the same footing as the recovery of Rent, of which it forms a part.

according to the present value of Land, to be paid annually in lieu of Tithes ; the amount so ascertained to be accommodated at certain intervals to the changes in the price of corn.— If Commutation be decided upon, and this Plan were equitably arranged, there seems no objection to its general outline.* The great object, however attained, is to put an end to irritating bargaining between Parties who ought never to be brought into such a situation, by providing disinterested persons to settle what should be paid by one and received by the other ; and in such an object I venture to express my most decided conviction, that the great Body of the Clergy would not merely concur, but that they have long ardently desired its accomplishment.

If then such Alterations were made, as are here proposed, I really can see no just ground of complaint remaining. The Farmer, I conceive, would on the long run not lose by having two Landlords to deal with : for Tithe-free Lands are proverbially high Let. The amount both of Rent & Tithe, being settled in his Agreement, *Certainty*, which is so desirable in all outlay of money, would be attained ; and the Far-

* As the Poor Laws are now administered, the third Clause in the twenty-second Page of his Lordship's Bill, would probably lead in five years to more extensive Litigation than the present Tithe System has occasioned during the last Fifty.

mer, I think, would not find the Clergy less disposed than his Lay Landlord to meet those reductions which adverse seasons and fluctuating markets might require.*

The Landowner indeed may in some cases be unprincipled enough to wish, and even attempt to get rid of the claim of Tithes altogether; but if torn from the Clergy, can he suppose that the Public, and especially the Commercial part, powerful and clear-sighted as they are, would calmly behold a great addition of property conferred on the *Landed Interest* without a shadow of reason or equity? The Landowner must calculate on paying heavily for property which would then probably be estimated at its *real* value; he must either anticipate the imposition of a regular annual claim, not easily to be relaxed, or he must redeem the payment at a price which it might cripple him to advance. But would the Landowners of England from a base and short-sighted cupidity concur in an act of Spoliation? It would be a libel on them to entertain the thought. Suppose it otherwise, the reign of Spoliation is then begun. The Church by their connivance might be rendered the *first* victim: would it be the *last*?†

* If the foregoing views are correct, it should be remembered that they apply in great measure to all Tithe-owners, whether Laymen or Clergymen.

† It is a favourite maxim with some, to represent Tithes as a *Tax*. If this change of language be decided upon, only let it be fairly applied, and let Rents and Profits bear the same Name.

Much discussion has lately arisen, and a "Legal Argument" has been extensively circulated, to prove that Tithes are the Property of the Public and the Poor. As it would be extremely unjust to impute a wrong motive to any one who urges a claim for the Public or the Poor, for the same reason it is impossible to confide in the fairness of a Writer who stigmatizes any persons in one sweeping condemnation, as "inaccessible to reason and to truth." I do not know whom he meant to denote. For myself I can say, if it can be proved that I am annually receiving that which belongs to another, I would instantly resign it.

It is contended, that Tithes are the property of the Public, because the Parliament has the power to make changes with respect to them. Undoubtedly the Parliament may have *power* sufficient to invade the possessions of any man ; but that is not the question. A footpad puts a pistol to my head, and has *power* to take away my Property. The question is, can he *justly* deprive me of it?

It is contended, that Tithes are the property of the Poor by a reference to a very antient notion, (which is not proved by its Advocates to have *ever* prevailed)—that Tithes were intended to be divided into *four*, or *three* parts, of which the Poor were to enjoy *one*. I would readily bring forward all the information that is produced on either side of the question, but

this could only be done at considerable length, and I will not, by compressing it, advance what might be considered a partial statement. The subject has been enquired into by a Parliamentary Committee this year. The Evidence is printed, and I am quite content to refer my readers to that source of information, begging them to draw their own conclusion.

I believe the "Legal Argument" to be unfounded, and of course untenable, but I as freely declare that the Emoluments of Clergymen are intended not merely for their own comfort, but for the assistance also of their poor neighbours. Let it be fairly enquired whether any Body of Men in the Kingdom contribute so much in charity, in proportion to their means, as the Clergy do out of their Ecclesiastical Income? I am far from asserting that either they or the Laity contribute all that Religion requires.

I have now to advert to a few other points, which are so repeatedly agitated, that I will not shrink from the mention of them.

The Translation of Bishops from one See to another, has been so long a subject of animadversion, that it is hardly possible not to have formed some opinion as to its propriety. I have only to confess that, having considered it as well as I am able, and having heard the sen-

timents of others, whom I respect, I believe it would, for many reasons, be advantageous to discontinue the practice. An alteration as to the Revenues of the different Sees is, perhaps, a necessary consequence of such a change; but why the superintendence of their property should therefore be transferred to Commissioners, I cannot understand. The proposal seems to convey an unjust and disrespectful censure on the Heads of the Church.

Much has also been urged as to Deans and Prebendaries, and the Cathedral Establishments. In proposing freely what appears desirable, I shall, perhaps, please neither those who belong, nor those who are most opposed to them. I can only repeat, that these observations arise from a deliberate consideration as to what will be most for the public good. On the one hand, I must advance, that the Cathedral Establishments, both in a religious and worldly view, are a decided benefit to the Cities to which they are attached; on the other, it seems clear that they might be rendered much more beneficial. The objections to their present system have been stated in overdrawn terms by many recent writers: the improvements to be desired have been partly advocated by Lord Henley, though I speak only from recollection, not having his Publication before me. In the present state of the Church, when the wants of an encreased Population are so urgent, altera-

tions must be thought of, which different times did not require. The abolition of those Prebends, to which no duty is now attached, as at Salisbury, Lincoln, York, &c. would probably be acceded to without question. The Emoluments belonging to them, however small, might then revert to the Parishes from which they are derived, and thus a better Stipend would appear for a Resident Clergyman.

With regard to the other Prebendaries and Canons, it would be a great advantage, if they were longer resident, and therefore more connected with the cities in which they are placed; if they officiated and preached regularly in the Cathedrals; and lastly, if they were employed on Parochial Duties in some of the many ill-endowed and populous Parishes with which most Cathedral Cities abound. Where again the regular Establishments are larger than may be required, and now, when the employment of Clergymen as Singers in the Cathedrals is justly almost exploded, the Supernumeraries of any Class might be released from attendance, and placed as Resident Incumbents in those Parishes in the Patronage of the Body, which most require such a provision.

Thus without spoliation, without injustice, might all that is objectionable be remedied, all that is desirable retained, and a real benefit be conferred on many of our populous Cities, whose Religious wants evidently call for a more powerful and efficient attention.

The manner in which Patronage is exercised in the distribution of Ecclesiastical Benefices, is often complained of, and various plans are proposed, from the sanguine but ill-founded hope, that feelings inherent in the very nature of man can be eradicated or suppressed. That the motive with which every Cure of Souls is assigned, should be one of the purest and most conscientious consideration for the good of the people, cannot be for a moment questioned; and happy should every Christian be to witness the means of ensuring so desirable a result. An impatience, however, of existing evil, may lead to change without securing improvement.

In Parochial Elections, the occasional advantage is much overbalanced by evident objections. Why, again, should "ten unpaid Commissioners" exercise such a responsibility more conscientiously than other persons? Who is to name them? and when named, who is to prevent their indulging those partialities or prejudices to which man is subject? The true, the only remedy seems to consist in wise restraining laws, and a right state of public feeling, which alone can prevent the appointment of an improper Incumbent, or the neglect of Ministerial Duties, when appointed. The clamour, as to the undue exercise of Patronage, has been sometimes powerfully directed against Clerical Patrons; but the proverbial odium attached to the names of those who are charged with it,

proves that the cases are few, and it must be sufficient to prevent their increase.

The subject of Church Government is one which I mention, lest it should be supposed that I at all shrink from its consideration. Even were I competent to do justice to it, the cursory observations within which I studiously confine myself throughout, would render this impossible. I freely own, that I do not know in what particular manner objections may now be urged against this part of the system of our Church. None have ever occurred to me which seem really of weight. It is confessed, by the universal practice of the objectors themselves, that a power to regulate must be vested somewhere. Would not an unprejudiced man decide, without hesitation, that it is far better placed in the hands of a Bishop* than in those of a Committee of each independent Congregation? Many an excellent Minister, now obliged to consult the varying desires of others, instead of his own clearer views of duty, would, if I am rightly informed, be happy to exchange the iron rule of Lay Managers, for the more liberal controul of Episcopal Jurisdiction.

* The opinion of a Layman, on religious matters, is justly of weight. In an excellent Volume of Essays, by the late Mr. Hey, a Surgeon, at Leeds, it may be seen how far, not merely the *Name*, but the *Office* of a Bishop, as conferred in our Church, is agreeable to Scripture, and the practice of the Apostles. More than this, it is not necessary to urge in its defence.

Not that our Church Government is faultless, or as complete as our Reformers intended it should be; but, after all, the most effective Discipline is that already alluded to, I mean, a right state of public feeling,—a far better preventive against irregularity than any which Laws can exercise. I should sincerely regret to utter a word which ought to offend one Christian; but I must confess that, *if people knew their own hearts*, I believe the Dissent, which is founded upon an objection to our Church Government, would be found to arise from political, rather than religious feelings.

To object, again, to that protection which the State affords to our Church, appears at least an *unwise* course for any true friend of Religion to adopt. To advocate in such a quarter *indifference* as to Religion, to ask of Christian Governors, to be the only persons in the Kingdom who may not use their influence in promoting the best interests of man, is surely to require what would, in a Christian, be as disgraceful as it is unnatural. They who would rather learn from any Country than their own, may find a few bad examples of such indifference; but no point seems clearer, than that a Christian Government is bound to protect and encourage the best form of Religion which presents itself for its approbation. I submit these few remarks with feelings of sincere respect for *Christians* of every denomination, of

whom I request a candid consideration of them. My object is, not to answer an argument, but to promote Peace, and Union, and the Improvement of all.

The riches of the Clergy, is the last point I have to mention, and this I shall interweave with a few observations, which I address, on parting, to all orders and degrees of men amongst us.

The revenues of the Bishops, which are stated to be enormous, and fair objects of spoliation, naturally first occur. That a few of the Sees have become, from a change in the value of Property, much richer than is necessary, cannot be denied; and that this excess, as vacancies arise, might be advantageously distributed amongst those which are too poor, has been already hinted; but why should a just man invade undoubted property because in the hands of a Bishop? It has been in many instances applied to the noblest purposes. Into what hands could it be transferred where it would, in the course of years, be better used for the general good? In a Publication, much circulated amongst Dissenters, I have read of an Archbishop, as too much occupied with state and luxury, to be accessible to the claims of Religion and Charity. Such sentiments cannot, I trust, be acknowledged by the large body of Christians just mentioned. A more unfounded charge could hardly be advanced.

It is sometimes argued "the Apostles were poor; they had nothing: why should not Ministers of the Gospel be now the same?" To this it has been very properly answered, that, if they were poor, they claimed as their right a maintenance from their converts; and, if Apostolic times are to be the guide for Christians in this age, they should be fairly applied to all, to the Layman as well as the Minister; and all, who have lands or houses, should sell them, and contribute the price for the general maintenance of Christians.* Such appeals to the times when the Christian Revelation was first promulgated, under extraordinary provisions, are, in truth, inapplicable to the concerns of ordinary life, which require to be managed by means suitable to the wants and infirmities of man.

Again, it is sometimes asked "what do the Clergy *do* for their money?" After what I have written, no one will doubt my feeling that a Clergyman should fully execute his appointed duties; and if he does perform them, who can justly deprive him of property, justly acquired, and confirmed by the Laws of his Country?—Let all those who happily have possessions of any kind, beware how, from selfish motives, they join in a cry, which may endanger the stability of all property. Does the rich Banker work

* Acts iv. 34.

as hard as his Clerks, or the Country Gentleman as his Steward? If the cry be encouraged in one case, the question may soon be asked of *them*, what do they *do* for their money? Let the answer be ready, the only one which can justify their possessing it, namely, that they use it for the benefit of those who have none.

The unequal distribution of the Revenues of our Church is also complained of; but a thinking man will see in that inequality, which brings the Clergy into communication with all Classes, and brings persons from all Classes into the Church, a benefit rather than a wrong.—Many who advocate equality, would little like to have their own situation reduced to the level which they propose for the Clergy; yet the levelling principle may be applied with as much justice to one Profession as to another. Who has a right to stand forward, and say that he *deserves*, for the use of those talents which God has given, a better remuneration than his less gifted neighbour, who, with smaller powers, may be more upright and industrious than himself? A variety of stations has been, in every age, the necessary result of that condition in which we are placed. The order of Nature throughout is an ascending scale; and a Christian Patriot will not envy those who are above him, but will endeavour to *raise* the many, who are less fortunate in the race of life than himself.

Assuming then, that a Provision for the

Clergy is both equitable, and necessary, that its inequality is not to be condemned, are the Clergy too rich? are their funds expended for the Country's good, or not? If, with all the experience which History affords, it were asked what is the best distribution of a part of the National Wealth, the following could hardly be disputed:—Place in every district over its whole surface, a set of men whose education might render them useful, whose Profession should require them to be respectable, whose Duty it should be to be charitable. Provide that they are constantly resident, regularly engaged in promoting the best interests of their neighbours. Endow them with sufficient to exercise hospitality towards their equals, and kindness to the poor. Are then the Clergy of this nation endowed with more than is sufficient to fulfil duties thus plainly advantageous? I answer, undoubtedly not. A better distribution of their funds is all along supposed; but when you have enquired, when their real Income is known, I am persuaded it will appear that there are, in truth, numerous cases where a better provision still is desirable; and I say, without hesitation, that if they were better endowed, it would be better for the people. I have now before me the case of an extensive Parish, whose population exceeds 1300. The Land and the Tithes are the Property of a Gentleman, who does not reside. A poor

Cottage, and a small Stipend, are appropriated to the Clergyman. If, of the three or four thousands of Rent, a fifth part were the property of a resident Clergyman, would not all Classes in that Parish, in the course of Years, have been gainers by such an arrangement? Pursue this thought into every similar case, and the same result would appear.

It is painful to think that I may not enter further upon a more agreeable part of the present subject, I mean the *religious benefits* of a resident Clergy. Many, I trust, are fully alive to such considerations, but the general temper of the times little tempts me to advance them, and I must leave almost untouched *the great object*, to secure which, all that is here discussed is only the outward means.

And now, though I am not weak enough to suppose I can glean golden opinions from all, yet I will not conclude without finally appealing to the candid judgment of all who are interested in these subjects. Of the sanguine Reformer I ask, whether the proposals now laid before him do not meet the several objections most current amongst us; whether I have failed in pointing out a substantial evil, or in suggesting (not indeed the best) but some efficient remedy?

Of those who object to change, I as freely ask, shew me where I am wrong, and I will retract the opinion with far greater pleasure than

I have published it. On all the points now brought before the Public, I am not the originator of the discussion. There is not one which has not, in its turn, received a large measure of general attention. They are points which must and will be settled by this generation; and so fully am I convinced that the Clergy are the persons who ought, in justice to themselves, to advocate that settlement, that, small as my claims can be to public attention, it seems to me a Duty to lend my voice in the endeavour. If others more powerful may be induced to forward it, most gladly shall I witness their exertions, and advocate the wiser plans which they may suggest. But, whatever judgment may be passed on what I have written, and whatever may be in consequence my future lot, there is one opinion which I trust, I shall never shrink from avowing. I believe the Church, to which I belong, to be, in every view, an incalculable benefit to this nation, and that its destruction would be the heaviest blow that could now be inflicted on the Christian cause throughout the World. If I have appeared too much to insist on its temporal possessions, it is because its efforts cannot be maintained without that influence which in this world property alone can bestow; because its great designs throughout the Globe cannot be prosecuted without it; because I believe its property most advantage-

ously conferred for the public Good. Should its property, however, after all, be confiscated, I trust its Ministers will shew that it is not that alone to which they cling, and that the sentiments lately expressed by a young Incumbent on coming to his Parish, will be the sentiments of all. "Let my Tithes be taken from me, so long as a Maintenance is left, I will continue to the last, to execute those duties to which I am now devoted."

Let me then be excused, if, with these feelings, I call upon all of every Class to consider, before they join in schemes, which, having once entailed misery and suffering on this Nation, cannot with impunity be tried again.

To the Country Gentlemen, I hope it is not necessary to say much. They are, both from interest and daily intercourse, well able to judge what benefit they would derive by degrading a Body of persons, now resident amongst them as friends and relations; or, by not uniting against spoliation, which might next act upon themselves.

Of the Farmers, I may ask, what benefit would they ensure by joining in such plans: even if successful, would their land be cheaper? and the Tithe System once amicably settled, what further good could ensue?

Of Tradesmen, I ask, what would they gain by diverting into other channels, property

which must now be spent in England ;* most of which is laid out in our own Country Towns and Villages, and which secures the *local* expenditure of a larger amount, the *private* property of the Clergy ?

Of the inhabitants of the Cathedral Cities, I may enquire, what would they gain by seeking the overthrow of such Establishments ?— On the contrary, if the plans here proposed were adopted, they would ensure to them increased advantages.

To the labourer, I may say, Is the Clergyman your friend, or is he not ? Does he pay you ill when he employs you ? does he give you less assistance, or show you less kindness, than others who live around you ?

Of the Managers of the various Public Charities, I may enquire, Do the Clergy contribute less of money and time, and active assistance, than any other Class ?

Of those who value the existence of Christianity, whether Churchmen or Dissenters, I ask, would it be promoted by the overthrow of our Church ?

These claims, then, for the English Clergy, I urge as sincerely, as I have before advocated every Improvement which may secure the more

* It would be easy to name a few individuals, who have for years expended, in Foreign Countries, a larger Income than is enjoyed by the whole Clergy of this City.

complete performance of the various duties which they owe to their Country; and to all who desire their Country's good, I address those well-known words, often, but never more advisedly applied—

——— Si, quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum.

Norwich, August 13th, 1832.

POSTSCRIPT.

On forwarding the Petition inserted at page 9 to the Members of the House of Lords, many Answers, with which I was favoured, shewed that a large proportion of the Peers had already left London. It did not therefore appear adviseable to attempt Presenting it during this Session of Parliament.

FINIS.

